



Do Rituals and Sacraments Play a Role in Human Sanctification?

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In the vast and diverse landscape of religious practices, a key area of discourse and debate is the role of rituals and sacraments in human sanctification. These practices, rich with symbolism and steeped in tradition, vary widely across different faiths and denominations. Some argue that these rituals are integral to the process of sanctification and achieving salvation, while others counter that they are not necessary. In this discussion, we'll delve into the Christian perspective on this issue, grounding our understanding in the teachings of the Bible and exploring the role of faith and grace, the place of sacraments, and the paramount importance of a personal relationship with God.

Faith and Grace

The concept of salvation in Christianity is deeply intertwined with the principles of faith and grace. The Bible clearly articulates this in [Ephesians 2:8-9](#): "*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*" This passage underscores the belief that salvation is not something that can be earned or achieved through human effort, rituals, or good works. Instead, it portrays salvation as a gift freely given by God, emphasizing the essential role of faith as the conduit of this divine grace.

Role of Sacraments

In the Christian tradition, only two sacraments are explicitly instituted in the Bible - baptism and the Lord's Supper. These sacraments are viewed by Christians as significant rites that commemorate the life, teachings, and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. However, these sacraments in and of themselves do not confer salvation. The Apostle Paul, in [1 Corinthians 1:17](#), states, "*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*" This verse underscores that while sacraments hold a place of reverence in Christian worship, they are not the core of Christian faith; the gospel is.

The Issue with Additional Sacraments

While some Christian denominations, such as the Catholic Church, have instituted additional sacraments beyond what is explicitly mentioned in the Bible, it's not the institution of these sacraments that is problematic. Rather, it is the belief that these additional sacraments contribute to individual salvation that is of concern. One notable example is the sacrament of Confirmation, which is not derived from biblical teachings and bears similarities to practices found in pagan religions. According to Catholic doctrine, this sacrament is believed to impart the Holy Spirit to the recipient. However, it's crucial to note that, according to the Bible, only Jesus Himself can bestow the Holy Spirit. Another sacrament, the Eucharist, is believed by Catholics to literally become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This belief contradicts the biblical teaching that the Lord's Supper is a symbolic act done in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, not a physical transformation of bread and wine into flesh and blood.

Personal Relationship with God

At the heart of Christian faith lies not a set of rituals or sacraments, but a personal relationship with God, facilitated by faith in Jesus Christ. This is beautifully encapsulated in [John 14:6](#), where Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." This verse affirms that it is not through rituals or sacraments, but through Jesus Himself that we attain salvation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while sacraments and rituals hold a place of respect within the Christian faith and serve as tangible expressions of spiritual truths, they are not the fundamental elements of salvation. The Bible underscores the primacy of faith, grace, and a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is through these, not through the performance of rituals or participation in sacraments, that we find sanctification and salvation.

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